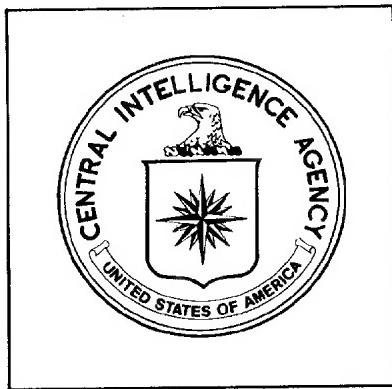
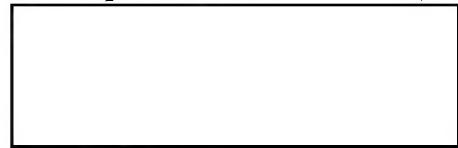


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Middle East–Africa–South Asia

STAFF NOTES

State Department review completed

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Ethiopia

Government Tries to Revive Lagging Rural Program

The ruling military council has made clear that it is determined to continue its trouble-beset campaign to indoctrinate the rural population in the regime's socialist goals through the use of students.

In a proclamation on the year-old program issued in mid-December, the government publicly admitted errors and mismanagement. In an attempt to rally student support, the government promised to release students now imprisoned, exempted from punishment others who failed to complete their service, and made certain other concessions.

A government spokesman has admitted that 25 percent of the 57,000 young men and women who were sent to the countryside had deserted. An official connected with the rural campaign has privately put the desertion rate at 50 percent. The US embassy in Addis Ababa reports that the students still enrolled in the program have congregated in the larger towns because of peasant opposition to them.

The initial enthusiasm that at least some of the students had for the program has been eroded by the government's inability to provide them with direction and logistical support--and sometimes even food. In some areas, the government has been unable to protect the campaigners from landlords and other foes of the program.

Although the government is probably sincere in its expressed determination to continue the program, prospects are not bright that it will be any more successful in the future. It is not likely that the council will assign the necessary funds to the campaign, nor that administrative and logistical

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inadequacies will be overcome. Some students have been sufficiently cowed by fear of reprisals to return to their rural posts, but student enthusiasm will almost certainly remain low. The precarious security situation in many parts of the country is a further obstacle.

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